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Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOMINATIONS OF:
GENERAL TOD D. WOLTERS, USAF
FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND
TO BE COMMANDER, UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND
AND
SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER EUROPE; AND
GENERAL STEPHEN J. TOWNSEND, USA
FOR REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND
TO BE COMMANDER, UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

Washington, D.C.

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U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in
Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. James M.
Inhofe, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Inhofe
[presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis,
Cramer, Scott, Blackburn, Hawley, Reed, Shaheen, Gillibrand,
Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Heinrich, Warren, Peters,
Manchin, and Jones.

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Chairman Inhofe: Good morning. The committee meets today to consider the nominations of General Tod Wolters and General Stephen Townsend to be the Commander of U.S. Africa Command and Wolters to be the Commander of the United States European Command and Supreme Allied Commander in Europe.

We thank the witnesses for all the years and sacrifices they have made. And I have been able to meet both the wives. So I will give you the opportunity to introduce them when your time comes. You better not forget it. That is one of the big mistakes people make. They bring their wives and then they forget to introduce them.

General Wolters, if confirmed, we will be counting on you to push EUCOM and NATO to adjust to the reality of strategic competition with Russia. Vladimir Putin will do everything he can to undermine and divide the West. That includes everything from military forces to cyber attacks to election meddling. We need a new and stronger deterrent that recognizes this range of challenges.

We have made a lot of progress in strengthening the deterrence against Russia, including through the European Deterrence Initiative, but as General Scaparrotti testified before this committee last month, we have still got a lot of work to do in improving our posture and capabilities in
Europe.

We will also be counting on your leadership in NATO, which remains critical for America’s national security. 70 years after its creation, the American commitment to article 5 is ironclad. Now we need our allies to honor their pledge to reach the 2 percent and invest that money in the capabilities and readiness needed to fight and win. I am glad we have seen progress on this front, but not enough progress.

General Townsend, if confirmed, you will confront the increased complex set of challenges across Africa from the continuing threat posed by terrorist groups like ISIS and al Qaeda to great power competition with China and Russia. While the challenges of Africa are on the rise, AFRICOM continues to suffer from the shortfalls. You know, I was somewhat involved in that when we started AFRICOM. AFRICOM used to be a part of three different -- or Africa used to be a part of three different commands, EUCOM, CENTCOM, and PACOM. And we got our own COM, but we did not get the resources to go with it. So we want to talk about that just a little bit.

So we thank the nominees for their willingness to continue service, and recognize Senator Reed.
Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me join you in welcoming our nominees this morning. I want to thank you for your decades of military service and your willingness to continue to serve our nation. I also want to welcome your families and thank them for their support. I deeply appreciate the effort and know it is a family effort not just an individual effort.

General Wolters, if confirmed, you will face a complex security environment, arising in large part from the reemergence of a revanchist Russia that seeks to advance its strategic interests by undermining the international order that has kept the peace in Europe for decades. Russia is willing to use military force to coerce and intimidate its neighbors and is actively and persistently engaged in hybrid aggression against the United States, our allies, and our partners, using every tool of national power to attack our democracy and to weaken our alliances. In addition, Russia’s nuclear modernization program and its violations of arms control obligations serve to undermine strategic stability.

The National Defense Strategy, or NDS, prioritizes the strategic competition with Russia. EUCOM has the challenge of turning that strategy into a military posture and program
in Europe that can credibly deter Russian aggression and, should deterrence fail, prevail in a military conflict. At the EUCOM posture hearing last month, General Scaparrotti indicated that more work remains to be done to ensure credible deterrent posture in support of the NDS. And I am interested in hearing your plans to continue that work in EUCOM.

The transatlantic relationship with Europe remains a cornerstone of U.S. national security. As former Secretary of Defense Mattis has emphasized, the United States’ strength is inextricably linked to the strength of our alliances, and we cannot effectively lead without maintaining those alliances. As Congress has made clear, there should be no doubt about the U.S. commitment to NATO and our resolve to come to the defense of our European allies in a conflict. I am concerned, however, that when we risk delaying or terminating critical military construction in Europe for the sake of, in my view, an unnecessary border wall, we undermine alliance cohesion and cause our European partners to question whether the United States is a reliable partner. General Wolters, I am interested in your ideas about reassuring our partners to ensure a strong deterrent to Russian aggression.

Numerous other security challenges are also within the EUCOM Commander’s responsibility. These include:
continuing bilateral and multilateral efforts to counter violent extremism; assisting in the defense of Israel, including through our missile defense presence in the region; managing our security relationship with Turkey, at a time when President Erdogan’s decision to acquire the Russian S400 air defense system has triggered suspension of Turkey’s participation in the F-35 fighter program; and providing logistical and other support to global operations, particularly in support of U.S. Central Command and U.S. Africa Command.

Turning to AFRICOM, implementation of the NDS will mean something very different from the EUCOM AOR. The administration has stated that they are seeking to prioritize low-cost, resource-sustainable, and innovative security solutions in Africa, and efforts are currently underway to reduce military personnel and equipment within your AOR, General Townsend. At the same time, China is pursuing a strategy of robust economic engagement throughout the AOR, gaining influence and building access to key economies and infrastructure across the continent. Russia is also building upon historic alliances in places like Libya to ensure access to the southern Mediterranean and forging new partnerships in places like the Central African Republic in order to extract resources and gain new allies.

General Townsend, I would like to hear your thoughts on
how the NDS directive to counter China and Russia should be implemented in Africa, particularly how such activities should be balanced against the ongoing efforts to reduce our presence and investments in the AOR as called for in the NDS.

In Africa, the U.S. military relies on a network of partners and allies across the continent, working by, with, and through to achieve shared security goals. In fact, AFRICOM often plays a supporting role to other U.S. and international agencies and partners in pursuit of a comprehensive approach to security challenges. General Townsend, we would appreciate your views on how best to ensure that diplomatic and developmental efforts occur in concert with military efforts in order to further our long-term security and stability goals in Africa. This is particularly important given that China and Russia seem to be strengthening their hand in Africa primarily through economics and diplomacy rather than militarily.

Thank you again to our nominees. Particularly, General Townsend, let me thank you for your service in Iraq. I think you, among many, but particularly you, set the foundation for the degradation of ISIS in both Iraq and Syria. For those efforts, I want to applaud you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.
We will have the nine required questions. And I would ask each one of you to audibly respond to each one. Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

General Wolters: Yes.

Chairman Inhofe: I only heard one.

General Wolters: Yes.

General Townsend: Yes.

Chairman Inhofe: Have you assumed any duties or taken any actions that would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

General Wolters: No.

General Townsend: No.

Chairman Inhofe: Exercising our legislative and oversight responsibilities makes it important that this committee, its subcommittee, and other appropriate committees of Congress receive testimony, briefings, reports, records, and other information from the executive branch on a timely basis. Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify before this committee when requested?

General Wolters: Yes.

General Townsend: Yes.

Chairman Inhofe: Do you agree, when asked before this committee, to give your personal views even if your views
differ that of the administration?

General Wolters: Yes.

General Townsend: Yes.

Chairman Inhofe: Do you agree to provide records, documents, and electronic communications in a timely manner when requested by this committee, its subcommittees, or other appropriate committees of Congress, and to consult with the requester regarding the basis for any good faith delay or denial in providing such records?

General Wolters: Yes.

General Townsend: Yes.

Chairman Inhofe: Will you ensure that your staff complies with deadlines established by this committee for the production of reports, records, and other information, including timely responses responding to hearing questions for the record?

General Wolters: Yes.

General Townsend: Yes.

Chairman Inhofe: And the last two. Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to congressional requests?

General Wolters: Yes.

General Townsend: Yes.

Chairman Inhofe: And lastly, will those witnesses and briefers be protected from reprisal for their testimony or
briefings?

General Wolters: Yes.

General Townsend: Yes.

Chairman Inhofe: Good.

So we will start now with opening statements. Your entire statement will be made a part of the record. But if you can confine it, we have good attendance. We need to get to the questions of the members of this committee. So we will start with you, General Wolters.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL TOD D. WOLTERS, USAF, FOR
REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER,
UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND AND SUPREME COMMANDER EUROPE

General Wolters: Good morning, Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of this committee, it is an honor to appear before you as the President’s nominee for USEUCOM. I am grateful for the trust extended by President Trump, Acting Secretary Shanahan, and General Dunford. If confirmed, I look forward to serving alongside the men and women of USEUCOM.

I would like to take just a couple of quick seconds and introduce my family. At my right 5 o’clock is my best friend and my wife, Charlene. For all of our years of service, she has quietly but relentlessly supported our family and all the men and women of the joint force. She makes us very, very proud, and she constantly inspires. Unfortunately, our two children could not make it today. They are fulfilling military duty. Our daughter Sandra is married to James, and I am convinced that James is the finest infantry officer in the United States Army, present company excluded.

[Laughter.]

General Wolters: They and their four children just completed battalion duty at Fort Campbell, and our daughter Sandra is the epitome of a 21st century U.S. Army spouse.
She is truly a warfighting machine.

Our son Tommy, his adorable bride Natalie, and their daughter are currently stationed at Vance Air Force Base in Oklahoma.

Chairman Inhofe: Good for them.

[Laughter.]

General Wolters: Tommy is a former U.S. infantry soldier and a U.S. Air Force combat controller. He recently completed officer training school, and as we speak, he is a second lieutenant student in pilot training.

We are very proud of our family’s commitment to the military.

I would like to take a moment to comment on my table-mate. Our nation could not have nominated a better officer than General Steve Townsend. His talent and strategic-mindedness have no equal. If confirmed, I look forward to serving at his side in Stuttgart and throughout our theaters.

I would also like to pay tribute to General Mike Scaparrotti, the current Commander of USEUCOM. As this committee well knows, he is one of the greatest generals this nation has ever produced. Simply put, he is as fine a human being as I have ever met.

The nations that make up USEUCOM are as diverse and united as any in the world. We possess vital strategic
interests in our European area of responsibility, and we
embrace engagement to address collective issues. Under
General Scaparrotti, USEUCOM has fostered outstanding
relationships with a myriad of senior civilian and military
leaders. He has also worked tirelessly with our whole of
U.S. Government and has done the same with our allies and
partners. If confirmed, I will support this process and
interaction. It dramatically enhances our transparency and
alignment.

Leading and coaching a new generation of EUCOM
professionals and carrying on in winning fashion are high
priorities. EUCOM remains a theater of intense competition
and more. I am ever mindful of this challenge and eager to
engage. I vow to this committee to faithfully pursue the
policies and orders of the President and the Secretary of
Defense within the authorities you have provided combatant
commanders. Moreover, I will be open and transparent with
you and the rest of Congress.

It is an honor to serve, and I look forward to
answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Wolters follows:]
Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, General.

General Townsend?
STATEMENT OF GENERAL STEPHEN J. TOWNSEND, USA, FOR
REAPPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF GENERAL AND TO BE COMMANDER,
UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND

General Townsend: Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member
Reed, and distinguished members of the committee, good
morning, and thank you for the opportunity to appear today.
I am honored and grateful for the trust and confidence
of the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs, as their nominee to serve as the
Commander of U.S. Africa Command.

I would like to recognize General Tom Waldhauser, the
current AFRICOM Commander, and his wife Gail for their many
years of dedicated and superb service to our nation.

I am accompanied today by my wife Melissa, who has
actively supported me, our service men and women and their
family members for the 36 years that we have been married,
while raising our own two children. They could not be here
today, but I would like to recognize our sons Taylor, an
Army captain currently in Afghanistan, and Evan, also an
Army combat veteran, and their spouses Alex and Katie. We
also have one granddaughter Faye and a new grandbaby on the
way this fall.

I am here this morning with my battle buddy, wingman,
and friend, General Tod Wolters, to discuss shared
challenges and opportunities in both the AFRICOM and EUCOM
areas of responsibility. If confirmed, I look forward to working with General Wolters and my fellow combatant commanders to address common trans-regional issues, while sustaining joint force readiness and our ability to fight tonight across the globe.

Since the standup of AFRICOM over a decade ago, the command has made significant contributions to our national security interests across the African continent and in protecting our homeland.

There remain, however, numerous and complex challenges, including rapid population growth, poor governance, and insufficient opportunity. These challenges are long-term, multi-dimensional, and require a whole-of-government approach. If confirmed, I stand ready to work by, with, and through our interagency, multinational and African partners to address these challenges.

As General Waldhauser stated in front of this committee in February, Africa will be shaped by the increased presence of external actors over the next decade. Russia and China are increasingly active using economic and military means to expand their access and influence across Africa.

While we must up our game in great power competition, we also cannot take pressure off the terrorist groups like ISIS and al Qaeda. Despite significant setbacks, these transnational terrorist organizations still pose a
significant threat to U.S. interests and our partners. If confirmed, I will further the campaign that General Waldhauser and the leaders of AFRICOM have crafted, and as any new commander would, I will make my own assessment on the way forward.

I believe that Africa must remain an enduring interest of the United States, as we protect the homeland from threats abroad and compete with Russia and China as the central challenge to future U.S. security, prosperity, and access.

Finally, it is an honor and privilege to lead America’s finest men and women at AFRICOM. If confirmed, I pledge to give them and our nation my very best every day.

Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for your continued support to our armed forces. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Townsend follows:]
Chairman Inhofe: Thank you. We are very proud of both of you. It says so much about our officers that bring their families in and making that same commitment to defending America. It says so much for all of you.

The top priorities of this committee is implementation of the NDS, which prioritizes strategic competition with Russia.

General Wolters, you mentioned General Scaparrotti, and we all hold him in the same regard as you do. Do you agree with his assessment that -- he mentioned last month -- actually at this committee he mentioned that -- that we do not have the right posture and capabilities in EUCOM for a credible deterrence against Russia. What are your biggest needs in Russia? What do you think they are?

General Wolters: Chairman, I concur with General Scaparrotti’s assessment. As you well know, the NDS points out that our competitive advantage is eroding. I want to thank this committee for your assistance by delivering a predictable, sustainable, adequate budget that has afforded us the opportunity on the European continent to be able to improve our readiness. I am able to make that observation as the current U.S. Air Force’s Commander in Europe. And what we see from 2016 to 2019 is an improvement in readiness. We are still not to the point to where we have increased our competitive advantage to where we bought down
enough risk, and I think that is exactly what General Scaparrotti was alluding to and I concur with his assessment. If we continue on the campaign of readiness that we are currently on, we will be in a position as we start to approach the mid-2020s to where I think we will be in a place where we are comfortable with our competitive advantage.

Chairman Inhofe: That is good. We agree with that. There is some confusion right now with what is going on in Turkey, the fact that if they were to entertain using the S400 from Russia, that we would have to have a second thought in terms of what we are going to do with our F-35’s. And I think that yesterday a decision was made that we are going to withhold the training activity at Luke for these that were going to be training for the Turks. They have not said that they are going to use the 400, but they have not said that they are not going to.

I would like to have your opinion as to if this action is probably an appropriate action and then what your feeling is in terms of what their intentions are, even though they are unstated at this time.

General Wolters: Chairman, I concur with this committee’s belief that the S400 and the F-35 are not compatible. And if Turkey proceeds down a path to procure and operate the S400, they should not get the F-35. And I
believe that is the sense of this committee, and I concur with that decision. The system itself, the S400, is incompatible from a standpoint because it speaks a different language than NATO English, and it certainly is not interoperable. I would contend that we all understand that Turkey is an important ally in the region, but it is absolutely unsustainable to support collocation of an F-35 and S400.

Chairman Inhofe: Yes, I would agree with that.

General Townsend, you and I talked at some length about some of the problems in Africa. We were recently in Djibouti where we are not real sure what all China is doing. We do know, though, this is the first out-of-the-city-limits base that they have, and it is my understanding that they may even be going as far south as Tanzania. That is not confirmed.

The time that we were there -- and this was just a few weeks ago -- we actually flew over the area. There is some debate as to what China is doing in Djibouti. What is your opinion in terms of -- have they gone underground? Do they have activities? Do they have resources there? I am sure yours might be a better guess than mine.

General Townsend: Senator, thank you.

You are absolutely right that China is choosing to compete in Africa, and they are competing hard there. You
have rightfully pointed out their first overseas base outside the immediate confines of the first island chain is in Djibouti and only a few kilometers from our base there. I do not know what is beneath their base, but I will make it a point to find out and probably report back in a closed setting once I know that.

Chairman Inhofe: Yes, and that would be perfectly acceptable. You got to keep in mind China is pretty good at going underground. We were not long ago in the South China Sea. Of course, they have seven islands there that they have -- well, our allies over there in that area have said it looks like they are preparing for World War III. You have to wonder what they are up to in Djibouti also.

General Townsend: Well, certainly you know, they have some open activities. They are trying to further their economy, further their diplomatic efforts. They are also trying to protect those efforts with their military forces just as we would, but I also think they have some activities that are not quite as open and I have concerns about that. I pledge that, if confirmed, I will certainly look into that because I think competition with China is something that AFRICOM --

Chairman Inhofe: And we on this committee can assist you in getting the type of classified briefing that I think it probably deserves at this time.
Senator Reed?

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again, thank you, gentlemen, for your service to the nation.

General Wolters, you rightfully identified the readiness of being militarily prepared as a deterrence against Russia in Europe. One of the things that General Scaparrotti also mentioned is his concern about effective unification across the interagency and his assessment also that we have yet to develop a multifaceted strategy to counter Russia. And this is in the face of a Russian sort of approach that is famously described as hybrid, incorporating a whole range from conventional military forces to special operations forces to disinformation to little green men to a host of things.

Where do you think we are with respect to this effective unification across the interagencies in a whole-of-government strategy vis-a-vis Russia?

General Wolters: Senator, I think we are improving. We have to continue to wake up and embrace the campaign every second every day, every week, every month to improve our overall strategic transparency and alignment with a whole-of-nation, whole-of-government approach. And as you well know, Senator, Russia is keen to apply indirect activity where they apply a whole-of-nation approach with a
proxy force.

With each passing day, as a result of a predictable, sustainable, adequate budget, I have seen improvement in our ability to use resources to improve our transparency and alignment from a whole-of-government approach. And I think we have to continue on the trajectory that General Scaparrotti has us on and we will see success.

Senator Reed: In terms of an adequate budget, that in your view, I presume -- I will ask you -- would also incorporate adequate budgets for the State Department, adequate budgets for other agencies like the FBI who conducts some activities in our embassies. Is that fair?

General Wolters: Yes, Senator.

Senator Reed: Thank you very much.

One other area of specific concern to all of us constantly is cyber. Do you feel that you need more resources from Cyber Command?

General Wolters: Senator, we do. We have a request in. We currently have 81 vacated billets, and as the months and the years go by, we have received support from the services and we are continuing to fill those billets.

Senator Reed: Thank you very much, General.

General Townsend, once again, thank you for your distinguished service and likewise, General Wolters, for your great service.
Africa presents an interesting sort of situation. You have been told to do more with less effectively in the National Defense Strategy. And as my chairman has pointed out, China and Russia are making significant inroads. A lot of what the Chinese are doing is not with the exception -- and it is a large exception, their base in Djibouti. A lot of it is economic, the Belt and Road. And you are going to be in a position of trying to counter that. Once again, it raises a question of sort of whole-of-government approach, including economic development, capacity building for nation states in Africa that have weak governments.

Can you give us an idea of how you are going to approach that, particularly when you have been told to cut back?

General Townsend: Senator, I think that we do have to compete with China on the African continent. I think you have rightfully pointed out that it is going to be a whole-of-government approach and I think probably not mainly a military approach. I think there is certainly a military aspect to that competition.

Part of the optimization that you are referring to is really to reset our counterterrorism posture to a more sustainable basis and to allow us the room and the breathing space to compete in the military dimension. I think that our nation will compete diplomatically and economically
probably on a greater scale than militarily. But your point about it being a whole-of-government approach, just like in Europe, is exactly right.

Senator Reed: We are seeing now, as reported in the press, the Russians have moved into the Central African Republic. They are advising them, which seems to be an attempt by Putin to return to the great power influence that they enjoyed under the Soviet Union.

In your view, that is a new and emerging threat on the continent. Is that an accurate assessment?

General Townsend: Senator, I think just like China, Russia is also competing on the African continent. In my view, their efforts in the Central African Republic are more exploitative than anything else. They are offering some training. They are providing some security and some arms, and they are also extracting gold, diamonds, and a lot of other minerals out of there for a song I think. So I think they are very much doing that in their interest, and it is exploitative in intent.

Senator Reed: Thank you. Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Wicker?

Senator Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony and your
Let me just say how reassuring it is to hear the chairman and the ranking Democrat on this committee stress our strong support for NATO, for the article 5 commitment of all the members, and it is good to see that done on a bipartisan basis.

I will not ask another question about Turkey except to say that I am glad that the chairman brought it up early. I will echo that the acquisition by a NATO ally of the S400 is not the action that one would expect from an ally, and it calls a lot of things into question. And I am glad to hear the chairman announce a decision to withhold training of Turkish pilots at Luke Air Force Base. I do not know how that will turn out, but it is troubling and it calls into question a lot of things that we have assumed from our long-time ally Turkey.

Let me ask, General Wolters, about sea power. The USS forward destroyers based in Rota -- they perform ballistic missile defense missions, carry out strikes into Syria, boost NATO’s presence in the Black Sea, and monitor Russia naval activities in the eastern Mediterranean. Some are proposing adding two destroyers at Rota.

I asked General Scaparrotti about this a few weeks ago when he was here, and he supported the idea of two additional destroyers at Rota. Do you agree with General
Scaparrotti’s assessment about stationing additional destroyers in Rota?

General Wolters: Senator, I do.

Senator Wicker: Are we going to need a larger or smaller fleet in EUCOM going forward?

General Wolters: Senator, it is my belief that we will need a fleet that possesses the capability to cover more time and cover more distance. I suspect that is going to require two additional destroyers per the conversation I have had with General Scaparrotti in my current position as the Air Force’s Commander in Europe.

Senator Wicker: Thank you very much.

Now, let me move then to our allies in Poland. As you know, they have actually requested that the United States establish a permanent base in Poland. So I want to ask you what you think about that. There are at least two schools of thought. One would be potential stationing of a permanent U.S. base in Poland. Another would be a permanent rotational basis there.

What is your initial assessment, and what are the factors that we need to consider in making that decision here at the congressional level?

General Wolters: Senator, I think the first factor has to be mission. As you are very familiar with, Poland is currently hosting a rotational brigade combat team, a
rotational combat aviation brigade, and a small headquarters-like entity. The offers that are on the table in negotiation between the minister of defense and our Secretary of Defense Office with respect to what we could bring into the country for the price of approximately 2 billion euros is an organization that could look like an aviation dep, an organization that could like an aerial port, an organization that could look like remotely piloted aircraft mission control elements, or an organization that could look like a headquarters-like staff.

I believe because of the propensity that Poland has displayed in hosting the brigade combat teams and the combat aviation brigades on a rotational basis would put us down the path that we would be very comfortable with the offer that is on the table to go ahead and select the rotational brand just because of the demonstrated capability that we have seen up to this point for the nation of Poland to host rotational assets from the United States.

Senator Wicker: Thank you.

And one other thing, General Wolters. You and I discussed this when you came by the office. The statute, as it currently exists, calls for a return to sequestration. I do not know if our listeners and viewers out there in the general public understand that unless the statute is changed, we go back to sequestration not only in DOD but the
State Department, as Senator Reed pointed that out. Is “disaster” a strong enough word to describe what that would mean if we do not take action and actually change the law to prevent this?

General Wolters: Senator, sequestration would dramatically impair our readiness.

Senator Wicker: And with regard to Senator Reed’s question about this, does that apply with regard to not only to the DOD budget but to the State Department budget, which he asked you about?

General Wolters: Senator, I believe that it does because it is a whole-of-nation, whole-of-government approach, and all those entities use the capabilities of their sister departments. So it would impact our capability to properly deter on continent.

Senator Wicker: Thank you, sir.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Wicker, for bringing that up.

Senator Peters?

Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To our witnesses, thank you for your service to our country.

General Townsend, I want to follow up on a question that was asked about central Africa from Senator Reed. Basically building on what we heard from General Waldhauser
when he appeared before our committee back in February and talked about Russian influence in Africa specifically, and he mentioned the Wagner Group, which is a Russian mercenary organization I understand operating heavily in the region. He talked about having trainers in central Africa and that a Russian is now serving as the national security advisor to the president of that country as well. I think it was also highlighted in a "New York Times" story just last week.

So my question to you is what risk do these mercenary groups pose to the United States? How concerned are you?

General Townsend: Senator, I have some experience with these groups and specifically the Wagner Group from my time in Syria. I think they concern me greatly. I am sure they concern General Waldhauser as well. They are a quasi-military, and as we saw play out in Crimea and Ukraine, little green men running around not necessarily following rules of behavior we would expect from proper armies. So I have a pretty significant concern for the use of these kinds of forces in a way that the Russians are using them on the continent. And if confirmed, this is something I will certainly be looking into in greater detail.

Senator Peters: So you say they are quasi-military, but they are closely tied to the Russian Government?

General Townsend: They are. In fact, they train right alongside the Russian armed forces.
Senator Peters: So when you say you will look into their operations, what sort of things will be the subject of that inquiry?

General Townsend: Well, it will be an endeavor to try to figure out exactly what they are doing with them. As you mentioned, they are using them to guard the head of state. They are using them to train some of the local armed forces. Some of that could be benign. Some of that is probably less than benign.

Senator Peters: We have talked quite a bit about whole-of-government and how the United States needs to be a counterforce to both the Russians and the China. Could you give us some understanding of what you think the long-term ramifications will be for African countries that are working closely with Russia and China in supposed economic development and security cooperation projects? What concerns you about that?

General Townsend: Senator, I think for our African partners, they probably have their eyes open about what the Russians and Chinese are about. I think that they are offering a lot of military assistance and a lot of economic assistance, but there is a whole lot of strings attached to that assistance and the potential for their debt to increase significantly to countries like China. I think, as we have seen play out in some other places in the world, if they
cannot make good on their debt, then they wind up
surrendering more of their sovereignty and more of their
resources to the Chinese and the Russians. So I think that
is problematic. And for the United States, I think it is a
cconcern to all of us because of the potential impacts on our
access on the continent and our influence.

Senator Peters: General Wolters, when General Milley
was here last week, he talked about why he supports having
rotational forces in Europe, specifically Poland, as you
have discussed already. But one of the benefits that he
mentioned was the ability to exercise the strategic muscle
memory of TRANSCOM, making sure that we are dealing with
some of the logistical challenges in Europe, including
difficulties with rail, heading the use of public roads and
others to actually move men and material to the fight.

My question for you, sir, is what logistical challenges
do you foresee in Europe as you take this position, and how
can we improve that infrastructure? What should Congress be
thinking about?

General Wolters: Senator, the support with the
predictable, sustainable, adequate budget has certainly
helped. And as you are probably familiar with, NATO has
recently stood up Joint Support Enabling Command. That is
one three-star NATO that is focused on improving road and
rail access from Germany eastward all the way to the Russian
border. That is an area of challenge as a result of the conditions on the ground over the last 15 years. And if confirmed, I will place heavy emphasis, as General Scaparrotti does, on logistics throughput to ensure that we can close on the enemy at a faster pace.

Senator Peters: Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Peters.

Senator Ernst?

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for being here today and to your families as well. Thank you for joining us.

General Wolters, I would like to start with you, and I appreciate your taking time last week to stop in and sit down and visit with me. We did have a very good discussion, I believe, about our NATO allies and how beneficial the mil-to-mil relationships are. And so I would like to visit a little bit about that.

We do have, of course, the 70th anniversary coming up of NATO, and this truly has been one of the most successful alliances that this country has seen.

So let us talk a little bit about NATO’s evolving role as we move forward working together against our mutual adversaries. Can you really describe for those of us on this panel but then also for the greater public what are the tangible benefits that we get from having those NATO
alliances? What can we see and feel as a public?

General Wolters: Senator, 70 years of continual peace on the European continent has afford young kids to grow up and have the opportunity to serve in positions like yours and positions like mine. So the ability of nations in NATO to embrace our Western democratic values is good for all.

Senator Ernst: It is fantastic.

And how do you see their role evolving then as we move forward into the 21st century to counter not only Russia, as they seem to be resurging, but also China. And as China is making economic inroads into Europe, how do we see NATO being involved in that?

General Wolters: NATO obviously promotes Western democratic values, and what has been very positive to see over the course of the last 3 years in my current capacity is NATO’s willingness to transition missions. And they have done so through NATO command structure adaptation to where we have endeavored to participate in exercises in the Pacific to continue to promote the NATO values.

Senator Ernst: Thank you very much for that.

And, gentlemen, for both of you, I chair the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities. And one of the areas that we focus on is making sure that we are adequately equipping our special operations forces to face evolving asymmetrical threats.
And, General Townsend, I will start with you. This is an area you are intimately familiar with. Can you describe how you would work with Special Operations Command to employ our SOF operators both to counter violent extremist organizations and to counter the rising threat of China and Russia and how you would balance that?

General Townsend: Senator, as you know, our special operating forces in all services bring incredible capabilities to the fight. And General Rich Clark and I have a long relationship, and I know that we will work very well together. That is one of the first things I am going to do, if I am confirmed, is to seek his advice on how to best employ special operating forces on the African continent. I think that they are being employed by AFRICOM there in a remarkably effective and efficient fashion. I think that as we go forward and I think more of our effort will turn towards great power competition, I will seek the advice of our best special operations leaders as to how best to employ those forces.

Senator Ernst: Thank you. And they have a very small footprint. We enable them to do very much with very little. So I appreciate that, and I know that you and General Clark will have a very, very good working relationship. So thank you very much.

And, General Wolters, with Russia threatening European
countries like Ukraine and the Baltics -- and I just returned from Ukraine not all that long ago -- what do you see as the most effective method of employing SOF to counter some of what we call the gray zone activities?

General Wolters: Senator, thank you again for your visit to the hot war. Your commitment and your engagements improve the trust between our forces and certainly those of Ukraine. I think it is absolutely imperative that we bake SOF forces into all aspects of the campaign, start to finish, and certainly in all components, air, land, sea, space, and cyber. And I think over the years as the United States, we have done a better job of doing so. And as you are familiar with, we had plans in place that use SOF forces in all elements that I just alluded to to increase our overall deterrence capability.

Senator Ernst: Well, gentlemen, thank you. My time is expiring. So I will yield back. But, again, thank you very much for stepping up into these positions, and certainly I look forward to supporting you. And thank you to the families as well.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Ernst.

Senator King?

Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Wolters, you mentioned in your prepared testimony -- and I think we have discussed this -- the
importance of exercises in Europe and particularly coordination and exercises with our NATO allies. How do we ensure that exercises do not trigger a response or a miscalculation or a misunderstanding, a kind of “Guns of August” situation? Can you discuss the precautions that may be in place to obviate that concern?

General Wolters: Yes, Senator. As part of our basics for military defense planning and military decision-making, escalation management is a key assumption that we have to square away from the beginning. And I can tell you that for all operations that I have been involved with as the air component commander in serving General Scaparrotti for the last 3 years, escalation management is continually addressed. Whether it is a small military training team, a small exercise or a large exercise, in 100 percent of the events that we embrace, we take a look at any of the ramifications on the periphery with respect to Russia and we ensure that we have our escalation management under control.

Senator King: Is there any communication with the Russians to the extent of, hey, this is an exercise?

General Wolters: Senator, the only communications that I have with the Russians have to do with safety deconfliction, and the way I communicate is through General Scaparrotti, and General Scaparrotti will make that call only for safety deconfliction. We do not share the
specifics of operational movement prior to activities.

Senator King: But the question of miscalculation and misunderstanding is one that you are conscious of and have contingencies to deal with.

General Wolters: Yes, Senator.

Senator King: Thank you.

Changing geography a bit, the Arctic, a huge area of potential cooperation or conflict particularly with Russia. How do you see developments in the Arctic during your administration, if you will, and how do we push those developments toward cooperation rather than conflict?

General Wolters: A smooth, fusing in of exercises, and Senator, as you well know, we just completed a Trident Juncture exercise, very large, with 50,000 U.S. military members that were involved. And escalation management at the start of the exercise was a huge consideration to make sure that we were not doing things that would improperly cause a conflict. But those exercises bring soldiers that start to understand the environment. They bring with them a higher degree of confidence and expertise to where they can operate in that environment. And as you well know, at the strategic level, there are ongoing discussions between combatant commanders to ensure that we have the appropriate transparency and alignment.

We are very excited, and if confirmed at USEUCOM, I am
very excited to have the opportunity to work with General
O'Shaugnessy on the specifics of what we can do from a
NORTHCOM and EUCOM perspective to better improve our
transparency and alignment with activities in the Arctic.

Senator King: Well, the data that I have seen is that
the Russians are significantly increasing their presence
there, military presence, along their shore of the Arctic.
It is hard to know which is south and north and east and
west when you are the North Pole. But is that a concern,
and how do we respond to that? And again, to go back to the
beginning, how do we move back toward cooperation rather
than confrontation?

General Wolters: Senator, that is a concern, and I
think we need to respond as we have by increasing the
activity via exercise and training events in the vicinity of
the Arctic.

Senator King: Thank you.

General Townsend, it is interesting, as I think through
these hearings, you all are coming into this position and we
are asking you questions as if you have been there for 10
years. But bearing that in mind, do you have a view on what
Russia and China are after in Africa? Is it natural
resources? Is it neocolonialism? What are their goals on
the African continent?

General Townsend: Senator, I think it is a lot of the
things that you just stated. I think primarily they are
after economic benefit, but right behind that I think they
are after some of the same things that the United States is
concerned with, access and influence. And I think that they
are after access and influence to our detriment. I think
that in the opening comments by the chairman and the ranking
member, they talked about the return of Russia to the
international scene, the rise of China, and some of that is
to be expected I think. But I think we have to keep in mind
a clear eye that their goals are to our detriment.

I think also it is simply extractive in some cases. I
mentioned the Russians in the Central African Republic.
They are just trying to get some of those minerals out as
cheaply as they can I think.

Senator King: And the Chinese seem to be inventing a
new form of colonialism, debt colonialism, where they are
putting people in debt and then pulling the strings back.

I would suggest that your first line of effort,
strengthening partner networks, is incredibly important
because those relationships, whether it is mil-to-mil or
country-to-country, are going to be important to resisting
pressure from those countries.

General Townsend: I agree, Senator.

Senator King: Thank you. Thank you very much,
gentlemen.
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator King.

Senator Hawley?

Senator Hawley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Wolters, General Townsend, thank you for being here today. Congratulations on your nomination and I look forward to supporting both of you.

General Wolters, I enjoyed sitting down with you last week. Thank you for the time. I enjoyed our discussion.

I want to return to a subject that you and I talked about there, which is the future of the NATO alliance and also the steps that we need to take in order to optimally posture our forces to account for the return of great power competition and our needs vis-a-vis Russia.

Let me just ask you. Besides the two additional destroyers, which you have mentioned in today’s testimony, what other steps, be it manpower, equipment, operational changes -- what else do we need to do from your point of view in order to have our forces optimally postured to prevent a fait accompli scenario in the Baltics?

General Wolters: Senator, the predictable, sustainable, adequate budget has afforded us the opportunity through the European Deterrence Initiative to continue to rotate forces in and continue to increase our presence. And we have been able to do so. And I think in the future,
rotating in headquarters that appear to do the same things
as armored division headquarters do in the continual
rotation of fourth and fifth generation aviation assets will
be very helpful.

Senator Hawley: Very good. Thank you for that.

Let me ask you about our NATO allies. I will not lie
to you. I am very concerned, as I expressed to you when we
met, about Germany’s decision recently to decrease rather
than increase their defense spending.

But let us talk about the practical things that we need
our allies to do on the ground when it comes to preventing a
fait accompli scenario in the Baltics. From a posturing
point of view, can you give us some ideas about what would
be optimal for our NATO allies? Again, from a force posture
perspective, what do we need them to do to act as that
blunting layer that will blunt any aggression by the
Russians, which would, of course, enable us the time
necessary to respond?

General Wolters: Senator, I would ask our NATO allies
to continue on the trajectory of contributions that they are
currently on. As you are very familiar with, we have four
battalion-sized battle groups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania,
and Poland. Over the course of the last 2 and a half years,
I have had the opportunity to see the additive forces from
the NATO nations that have contributed to those battle
groups’ ability to connect in all domains. So with each passing day, based off the current trajectory of the contributions, we are improving our ability in air, land, sea, space, and cyber to better deter in the Baltics.

Senator Hawley: Let me ask you about Italy. When you and I sat down, Italy had just accepted the invitation to join China’s Belt and Road Initiative. We have also heard some European leaders describe China as a potential strategic partner.

What do you make of this? I mean, what is your reaction to this? Does Italy’s joining of the Belt and Road Initiative, does the view of some of our European partners that China is a strategic ally, does that make accomplishing our own military objectives more or less difficult?

General Wolters: Senator, it concerns me, and I think we have to remain vigilant. As you probably know, China has invested on the European continent heavily in ports in Sweden and also in Iceland, and they have recently discussed with Denmark the opportunity to conduct site surveys on air strips in Greenland. Those give us great pause. We need to remain vigilant. China does not embrace the same Western democratic values that we do in the United States or that we do in NATO. So we must remain concerned.

Senator Hawley: Thank you, General.

General Townsend, let me ask you about the balancing of
priorities that you would be asked to pursue as AFRICOM Commander. The NDS, of course, prioritizes DOD efforts vis-à-vis China and Russia and calls for -- and now I am quoting -- a more resource-sustainable approach to counterterrorism efforts across Africa and the Middle East.

Give us your thoughts on how we are to pursue that resource-sustainable approach to VEOs while also shifting our attention toward near-peer competition in your new AOR.

General Townsend: Senator, as you know, predominantly over the last 17 years or so, we have been very focused on countering violent extremist organizations around the world, mostly in the Middle East but not exclusively there. And that has been a lot of AFRICOM’s work over the last decade is countering violent extremists on the African continent.

As we realign our efforts to support the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, I believe it is right that we have to rebalance our efforts. It is not a binary choice, though. We have to do more in the great power competition arena, but at the same time, we cannot let off the gas on these violent extremists. I think that our efforts, AFRICOM’s efforts, on the African continent have been successful over the last decade or so, and there is a lot of violent extremist organizations operating there. We have not seen a successful attack on this homeland coming from Africa.
So I think we have to maintain that kind of pressure and disrupt and degrade those organizations and keep them a local threat, a regional threat at worst. And I think you can then rebalance your special operating forces and other efforts that have been dedicated to CT towards great power competition.

Senator Hawley: Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Hawley.

Senator Kaine?

Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you to the witnesses for your service and your testimony.

General Townsend, I would like to sort of continue along the same line as Senator Hawley with respect to AFRICOM. Pursuant to the National Defense Strategy, AFRICOM has recently started to look at plans for reducing special forces in Africa. I do believe that our building partner capacity efforts with African militaries have been a pretty strong part, and I know that that continues to be a focus of the AFRICOM work.

Is there still the same appetite for the U.S. engagement in building partner capacity among African nations? A few years ago, it really seemed like we were the partner of choice for many of the African nations. As they
looked at training, they either wanted to send people here or have our troops involved in partnership capacity. Do you see the same appetite for the U.S.’s involvement in Africa?

General Townsend: Senator, I do. I believe that there is a very strong appetite to partner with the United States. I think there is an attractiveness sometimes to what competitors like the Chinese and the Russians offer because they will offer arms with very few strings attached and on a very --


General Townsend: Exactly right. And we ask those questions, and we are a little bit more deliberate in our provision of that kind of support.

There is certainly, I think, no change in the appetite to engage with our forces and to attend our courses and that kind of thing. So I think that is a hopeful sign for the future.

Senator Kaine: Well, we always hear that our efforts abroad are by, with, and through partner nations, and I think as long as we can, I think building partner capacity efforts and training foreign military in IMET programs, one of the most cost effective things we do -- it is not a big part of the Pentagon budget. I am glad to hear that you see that appetite still there, and I hope it is something we can
provide. I have not visited partner capacity building efforts in Africa but I have in the Middle East and in South America. And watching our troops work with troops in other nations, training them on laws of war, on rule of law, as well as effective military tactics, I mean you really see the value add that we can provide to nations in their own defense, but also building strong relationships that are helpful to us. I hope we will continue that.

General Wolters, I know there has been a question asked earlier about Turkey with respect to the purchase of Russian systems and the sale of F-35’s. So I am not going to repeat that. But the Turkish issue is a challenging one. There are so many equities involved, the use of the Incirlik base at Adana has been really important to us in battling against ISIS.

Talk a little bit about how you want to approach the Turkey question, especially given other challenges in the relationship, the U.S. support for the Kurds in northern Syria, who have been effective fighting partners, which caused challenges for Turkey. Some of these questions are for the Secretary of State, but I also think EUCOM and CENTCOM are very involved in these questions. And just talk a little bit about how you might approach that big picture.

General Wolters: Senator, I have had the opportunity to work for General Scaparrotti as his Air Component
Commander for the last 3 years, and he probably spends 65 percent of his time focused on Turkey. His heavy, heavy engagement in all aspects of U.S. and Turkey relations and NATO and Turkey relations has been very, very helpful. And if confirmed, Senator, that is exactly the glide path that I will follow.

Senator Kaine: Again, Senator King said we ask you questions sort of assuming you are doing the job rather than you are being nominated for the job. But since you have worked with General Scaparrotti, what is your sense of the status quo right now or the state of progress right now in U.S.-Turkish dialogue over the Kurds in northern Syria? Have we worked out kind of a working arrangement with how the U.S. will continue to be partners with those who partnered with us without alienating Turkey? What is the status of that right now?

General Wolters: Senator, the negotiations are ongoing with General Scaparrotti’s staff and their counterparts on the Turkish general staff. And I do not know what the final outcome is, but I have had the opportunity to address this with General Scaparrotti. And we are having productive dialogue, and we suspect that this productive dialogue will continue, and as you well know, it specifically has to do with the Turkish-Syrian border. So more to follow, but negotiations are ongoing and they are traversing in a
Senator Kaine: What my impression is generally the
tensions in the relationship tend to be sort of at the
political level, but the mil-to-mil both communication and
cooperation between the U.S. and Turkey on the military side
tends to be pretty strong. Am I accurate in saying that?

General Wolters: You are accurate, Senator.

Senator Kaine: Okay. Thank you so much.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Kaine.

Senator Warren?

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The unclassified worldwide threat assessment by the
Director of National Intelligence said -- and I am going to
quote it -- global environmental and ecological degradation,
as well as climate change, are likely to fuel competition
for resources, economic distress, and social discontent
through 2019 and beyond. End quote.

That assessment also said, quote, damage to
communication, energy, and transportation infrastructure
could affect low-lying military bases, inflict economic
costs, and cause human displacement and loss of life.

Now, I have asked this question to other senior
military officers. So I want to be sure I get it on the
record here. General Townsend and General Wolters, do you
agree with the intelligence community’s assessment of climate change threat?

General Townsend: Senator, I am not a climate scientist, but as a warfighter, I pay attention to conditions on the ground, and here is what I see in Africa.

Senator Warren: Do you agree with their assessment?

General Townsend: I see that there is climate change in Africa.

Senator Warren: Okay. So do you agree with their assessment? They assess it as a threat. They do not just observe that it is happening. They do not just say the sky is blue. They assess it as a threat. I just want to know. Do you agree with their assessment?

General Townsend: Senator, I see those conditions as causing the threat.

Senator Warren: So you do see the threat then. You agree with their assessment.

General Townsend: Generally, yes.

Senator Warren: General Wolters?

General Wolters: Senator, I do, and I also know it is a military imperative to plan for weather change and weather change as a result of exactly what this report is referring to -- alludes to.

Senator Warren: Good. So let me ask you, will you commit to working with this committee to ensure that your

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commands are prepared to deal with the threat of climate
derchange to operations in your areas of responsibility?

General Townsend?

General Townsend: Yes, Senator.

Senator Warren: Yes.

General Wolters?

General Wolters: Yes, Senator.

Senator Warren: Good. Thank you. Adapting to climate
change impacts our military readiness, and I am glad that
you both take this seriously.

I have another question I want to ask about. Since
declaring Somalia an area of active hostilities in March
2017, the Trump administration has significantly increased
the number of air strikes against al Shabaab militants
compared with those carried out under the Obama
administration. In 2018, there were more air strikes in
Somalia than Libya and Yemen combined, and Defense
Department data for disclosed air strikes shows 47 strikes,
杀戮 326 individuals.

General Townsend, are we at war with Somalia?

General Townsend: No, Senator, we are not at war with
Somalia, but we are carrying out our operations against
violent extremist organizations in Somalia. It is a
designated active area of hostilities.

Senator Warren: So if I ask families of civilians that
have been killed or injured in these air strikes, do you think they would say we are at war, the U.S. is at war with Somalia?

General Townsend: I imagine, Senator, that they might say that, but I do not know that.

Senator Warren: As best I can tell, the strategy in Somalia, as it is in so many of the countries that the U.S. is bombing, is to keep killing terrorists and militants and hope that one day there are magically no more terrorists or militants to kill. I know that we are working, quote, by, with, and through, close quote, our Somali partners because this is our playbook everywhere. And I agree that fewer terrorists is a good thing. But I just want to broaden this discussion a little bit in the time left.

General Townsend, do you think that military force alone is enough to beat al Shabaab and address the root causes of terrorism and instability in Somalia?

General Townsend: Senator, I do not.

Senator Warren: Are we adequately resourcing the non-military side of our strategy?

General Townsend: I am not really sure. That is something I am going to have to look into if confirmed for the job.

Senator Warren: Okay.

What is our strategy for Somalia, and more important,
what is the measure of success in Somalia?

General Townsend: Well, I think what we are trying to do is create capacity there for the local Somalis to secure the nation themselves. And I think there has been some progress on that front.

Senator Warren: So how do you measure that? What is the adequate measure here? What is our metric?

General Townsend: I would say there is probably a range of metrics, but probably one on the military front would be a decrease in violent extremist attacks in Somalia over time, an increase in the capacity of their military forces to secure themselves, and a resulting decrease in the need for partners such as us to assist them.

Senator Warren: All right. So good. So we will look forward to seeing more information about this.

I just want to say -- make no mistake -- we are at war with Somalia, and there is remarkably little debate about that fight and about whether we are having success in reaching our objectives. I think we need to rethink our Somali strategy.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Warren.

Senator Tillis?

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, gentlemen, for being here and your wives and your family for serving our country.
General Wolters, I want to start with you. Senator Shaheen and I are co-chairs of the Senate NATO Observer Group. I think that in my discussions with General Scaparrotti, we are in this position where, on the one hand, we want them to step up their involvement to increase their readiness, their investment, and innovation, but on the other hand, we want to send a very clear message that NATO is the most important alliance I think that has ever existed.

What kinds of steps are you going to take? What kind of work do you think we need to do to make sure that they understand that the President’s rightful request for them to step up is in their best interests and in our mutual best interests?

General Wolters: Senator, I think we need to continue to look at burden sharing in the form of cash contributions and capabilities. And I would contend that in my conversations in my current posting on the European continent, as I discuss this subject with my mil-to-mil partners, they completely understand the 2 and 20 percent metrics and they think they are valid to remind all of us to continue with the cash portion of burden sharing. But contributions and capabilities are also a large part of it, and as you well know, Senator, many of the nations do a wonderful job of assisting all around the globe to
neutralize external ops planners against the United States and we need to bring that into account. Those kinds of discussions certainly increase the trust that we have amongst each other.

Senator Tillis: Thank you.

I want to also turn to Turkey. I know that the chair mentioned that and it is an area that I have personal concern with. The first step for those of us who have followed it, we know we last year allowed or was ramping up the process to allow Turkish pilots to train on the Joint Strike Fighter. Now there is some question whether or not we can do that with the current uncertainty with the S400. And then we have another date, which is just post 2020, that would actually be the transfer of planes into Turkey with the S400 decision looming out there.

But we also have another thing that I think is very important. Turkey is a partner in the supply chain for the Joint Strike Fighter production. So I think not only do we have to look at whether or not we can transfer those assets to Turkey, but we also, as a part of that process, have to determine what, if any, role Turkey could play long-term as a critical link in the supply chain. Do you agree with that assessment?

General Wolters: Yes, Senator, I do.

Senator Tillis: Thank you.
General Townsend, it is great to see you again.

I want to talk a little bit about Africa and what you consider to be the ordinal ranking of threats there. We know what China is doing in terms of their economic investment and some of their increased military presence. Russia I am less studied on. And then we also see it as a haven for ISIS, al Qaeda, and other malign organizations.

But as you are going into this job, what would you just rank right now as the key threats, either those or other threats, that you will be focused on when you assume command?

General Townsend: Senator, when I think of threats, I think of threats in two groups, today’s threats and tomorrow’s threats. And when I look at today’s threats, I would probably rank violent extremist organizations and their intent against America number one; number two, probably the Russians and what they are up to with their private military companies. Then number three is probably China. In the long term, I think that calculation probably changes. I will be very interested to see what China is really up to, but I think in the long term, they rise above Russia for sure.

Senator Tillis: With the constant pressure on budgets and some cuts that I think were appropriate, none, by the way, I think in your lanes, what priority do you put on or
what message would you send Congress with respect to foreign aid in Africa and how it makes your job easier?

General Townsend: Well, Senator, when we talk about a whole-of-government approach, you know, those are the bullets of my wingmen and battle buddies at the State Department and USAID. So I think they have to have ammunition to do their job just like the military has to have ammunition to do our job.

Senator Tillis: Well, both of you, I want to thank you for being here. I am going to keep on time so we can get to Senator Blackburn. But I look forward to supporting your confirmation. I hope that it is quick.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Tillis.

Senator Blackburn?

Senator Blackburn: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. And I thank each of you for being here and for your service to our country and to your families for their service to our country.

As we have done our hearings this year, I have put a good bit of focus on what is happening in the virtual space and what is happening with cyber. And I will tell you, General Townsend, Africa’s telecommunications system, the way it is interwoven with Huawei, ZTE, is something that is of concern to me.
And in my service in the House, I had the opportunity to represent Fort Campbell and the men and women that live there. And, General Wolters, I am pleased to know that you have family that just finished service in that wonderful community.

And also, I was just recently in the Ukraine and Poland with the 278th from the Tennessee National Guard and their deployment there.

And in these visits, whether I am with the 5th Division or the 160th there at Campbell or I am out with the Guard, they talk regularly about the importance of 5G, the deployment of 5G, the imperative of addressing interoperability -- it is an imperative -- how that is going to play into AI and how we equip and work with them for 21st century warfare.

So, General Townsend, I want to come to you first. As we talk about Africa’s telecom structure and that infrastructure that is in existence today and talk to me, as you take on this new position and you look at how our men and women are equipped and how you are going to work in that space, a little bit about your view on that great power competition, 5G, AI, hypersonics, the utilization, how that is going to affect Africa. And then the last minute, General Wolters, coming to you, if you will talk about it with EUCOM.
General Townsend: Thanks, Senator.

It is imperative of any U.S. commander to protect our network and protect our information. In all of our operations around the world, only a very small percentage of our data and communications flows across an entirely U.S. network. The great bulk of our data and communications in the military and on the diplomatic side and economic side flow across what is out there.

Senator Blackburn: And that is a problem.

General Townsend: Well, it certainly can be. As you have rightfully pointed out, the Chinese are laying track all over Africa. And I do not mean railroad track. I am talking about communications infrastructure that you are referring to. And their intent I think is -- on one side, it is purely commercial. They are providing a service and making a buck. On another side --

Senator Blackburn: What is your game plan for addressing it?

General Townsend: Well, that is a harder one.

Senator Blackburn: And how will you communicate that message? Because as you were there in host countries, how are you going to communicate that this is a problem? Huawei is a problem.

General Townsend: Yes. Senator, certainly I will communicate that message because if our data is traveling
across a network installed by the Chinese, we cannot be certain of its security.

Senator Blackburn: No, we cannot.

General Wolters?

General Wolters: Senator, I agree with everything that General Townsend said. I would harken back to our focus on cyber operations. With the assistance of this committee, we were able to establish in the U.S. a unified combatant command, USCYBERCOM, led by one commander who gives clear direction and guidance to the field. And what we have seen for the last 2 years from the guidance of General Nakasone is a dramatic improvement in the disposition of our defensive cyber operations force, better hygiene on the network, better ability to detect intrusions. Those are the blocking and tackling skills that we all need to embrace to ensure that we secure ourselves, not to be culpable to miscreants getting inside of our network. And I would work very, very hard to continue, as General Scaparrotti has, to promote the advances in cyber and to certainly promote the hygiene that is helping us secure our networks.

Senator Blackburn: Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Blackburn.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, gentlemen, both for your service in the
past and for your willingness to take on these critical commands.

General Wolters, NATO announced that it is creating a cyber operations center and that that center is expected to be fully staffed and analyzing threats and attacks by 2023. I wonder if you could give us an update on what you know about the status of the center and also speak to, given the cyber threats, what it is taking so long to get that set up.

General Wolters: As you know, Senator, cyber is a manmade network and very, very complicated. I am very proud to report that NATO and the United States have both elevated their strategic headquarters: ours, USCYBERCOM under the lead of General Nakasone. And certainly the Secretary-General Stoltenberg has pushed NATO to embrace cyber. And we have taken many of the tactics, techniques, and procedures that we have witnessed from the Estonia Cyber Center of Excellence because they have been very, very busy in improving the defense of their network, and we are imparting those tactics, techniques, and procedures to the headquarters at NATO.

I wish we could go faster. I am certain that nobody wants it to go faster than Secretary-General Stoltenberg and General Scaparrotti. And if confirmed, my commitment to you is this will be a high emphasis area.

Senator Shaheen: So is the challenge that we are
dealing with so many different individual countries? Is the challenge resources? Is the challenge getting the people to staff the command?

General Wolters: Senator, I think it is all of those. And I would say that your first challenge is probably the one that is most important, that is getting the policies in alignment across national boundaries to ensure that we have the overall national alliance and the overall NATO alignment to ensure that we could deliver the best security disposition for our cyber networks.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

General Townsend, earlier this year, General Waldhauser, when he was here, talked about his efforts to implement the Women Peace and Security legislation. It is legislation that I co-sponsored with Senator Capito, and it is something that I believe, looking at the data, makes a huge difference as we are thinking about having women at the table in conflict areas and in difficult situations.

So can you talk about what your thoughts are on continuing the implementation of that legislation, how you see that playing out, and what your commitment is to making sure that happens?

General Townsend: Senator, I have admired General Waldhauser and AFRICOM’s implementation of that legislation. They are very active with bringing women to the table, and I
think their thought is the same one you just described, that
if you bring more women into governance, if you bring more
women into military affairs, things seem to smooth out. So
I intend to continue and further the efforts -- if
confirmed, I will further the efforts that AFRICOM has done
on that front.

Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you. I appreciate that.
As you know, AFRICOM has been commended as a leader on
addressing the implementation of Women Peace and Security.
So I am pleased to hear you say you will continue to do
that.

One of the other issues that I had a chance to speak
with General Waldhauser about was what we are doing to try
and address the threat from Boko Haram and the young women
who are still being kidnapped across Nigeria and the work
with the Nigerian forces to try and train them and the joint
effort to address this.

Can you talk about what you think our commitment should
be and what we might be able to do to help deal with Boko
Haram?

General Townsend: Senator, they are one of a number of
serious violent extremist organizations that are a threat to
U.S. interests and locally and regionally. I think our
first priority has to be those that threaten the U.S.
home land and United States interests, then second, the ones
that threaten our partners. Boko Haram seems to fall somewhere right in the middle there. So I know they are high on AFRICOM’s list, and if confirmed, I will continue to press that.

Senator Shaheen: And can you specifically talk about the whole issue of kidnapping of young women and girls there and what specific activities we might be working on with the Nigerians to address that?

General Townsend: Well, speaking to the situation of kidnapping women and girls, kidnapping of anyone is horrible, whatever their gender or their age.

Senator Shaheen: But they seem to be more focused on young girls.


Senator Shaheen: Right.

General Townsend: So I will find out. I do not know exactly what AFRICOM is doing specifically with the government or the armed forces of Nigeria in that particular realm, but that is something I will look into, Senator.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I really appreciate that. If you could let the committee know when you learn that, I would appreciate it.

General Townsend: I will.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

Chairman Inhofe: Thank you, Senator Shaheen.
And we thank both of you. We appreciate very much your participation and your patience and that of your families. I am so proud that you have -- I am not saying that I have not done as good a job, but I do not have all my kids in the service. And so I just think it is really great that you have done that and what you have done. I am very proud of them and proud of you.

With that, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:53 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]